

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
STRATEGIC FORCES**



**TERRY EVERETT, ALABAMA
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: July 30, 2004

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**STRATEGIC FORCES CHAIRMAN REVIEWS KEY MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAMS
AIRBORNE LASER at Edwards AFB
GROUND-BASED MISSILE DEFENSE INTERCEPTORS at Vandenberg AFB**

WASHINGTON – Congressman Terry Everett, Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces warned Friday that continued cost overruns associated with the military's Airborne Laser (ABL) Program may place the program in jeopardy. Everett returned Thursday from a personal inspection of two key missile defense programs including the ABL. Funding for both programs are pending the House/Senate conference of the FY05 Defense Authorization Act.

"I now have a better appreciation for the complexities of the ABL system, and what it is these people are trying to accomplish," Everett said upon returning from his trip. "However, I'm deeply concerned that program costs may spiral to unanticipated levels which will place ABL in serious danger of survival."

Everett inspected the Airborne Laser (ABL) Program at Edwards AFB, CA, where the contractor team headed by Boeing is assembling the chemical laser system into a highly-modified 747 aircraft to prove the technology. The ABL is a critical component of the layered missile defense system, designed to defeat a ballistic missile attack in the boost phase of the launch. Everett came away impressed with the challenging science and engineering tasks that must be accomplished to perform the mission, and the complexities of the laser itself. However, he remains concerned about the increasing costs and program delays, and will continue to closely monitor the management of the program by the Air Force and Boeing.

The Ground-based Missile Defense (GMD) system is nearing initial operating capability later this year. Everett toured the GMD silo sites at Vandenberg AFB, CA, one of two sites which will be deployed to defeat incoming ballistic missiles in the mid-course phase of flight. The AF chose Vandenberg AFB for its location on the Pacific Ocean and to utilize old MX missile silos which are being refurbished to serve as a critical part of the GMD infrastructure. Everett noted that Ronald Reagan's vision for a strategic missile defense to protect the United States from a ballistic missile attack will finally become a reality later this year.

"I'm very pleased that President Bush and this Congress have carried Reagan's vision to reality."

On the Space front, satellite programs, including Space Based Radar (SBR), SIBRS-High and STSS, as well as launch capabilities for these satellites are also of keen interest to Everett. At Vandenberg AFB, a Delta IV rocket was viewed in a near-launch state, preparing for a special payload launch in early 2005. The Delta IV rocket is manufactured by Boeing in Decatur, AL, and shipped via barge to the West Coast.

Congress has been divided on the need for the Spaced Based Radar program, with the interested congressional defense and intelligence committees differing in their views of the future capabilities of the system. Everett met with AF program officials and the contractor, Northrop Grumman, to receive the latest programmatic information on the system. Everett believes the truly unique capabilities that SBR will provide for the warfighter are necessary, but cautioned the program officials that Congress will not tolerate new satellite programs that continue to exceed cost estimates, with constant schedule slippages.

“Spaced Base Radar will provide a truly transformational capability to our warfighters, and we must incorporate lessons learned so we don’t repeat the same acquisition mistakes that we experienced in SBRS-high and Future Imagery Architecture programs, that have led to billions of dollars in cost overruns,” Everett added.

During Everett’s trip, he also was briefed by the 14th Air Force Command at Vandenberg AFB, which has responsibility for the AF Space Forces, and the Air Force Doctrine Center at Air University, Maxwell AFB. This followed the subcommittee’s hearing last week on the importance of developing the AF “Space Cadre” of professionals to better understand and execute program management, training, and doctrine for space dominance.

Everett also toured a small company in Los Angeles that has set out to develop inexpensive commercial launch alternatives, and if successful, stands to revolutionize the space launch industry. This company, SpaceX, plans to make its first launch by the end of the year.

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